

look forward to receiving the delegation's assessment of the relief efforts so that our Government can best help those in need.

NOTE: The related proclamation of January 1, 2005, was published in the *Federal Register* at 70 FR 1157.

Statement on the Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunamis *December 31, 2004*

The disaster around the Indian Ocean continues to grow both in size and scope. I have been monitoring closely the developments and our recovery and relief effort underway. I also look forward to the detailed report of the official delegation led by Secretary Powell and Governor Jeb Bush that will travel to the region very soon.

The United States has already provided an initial, substantial effort through existing emergency response resources, the formation of the core group, and military assets. To help coordinate the massive relief effort, disaster response officials are on the ground, and we have established a Support Center in Thailand that is manned and operational. More than 20 patrol and cargo aircraft have been made available to assess the disaster and deliver relief supplies. Many of those aircraft are on the scene. We have dispatched the aircraft carrier *Abraham Lincoln*, the maritime prepositioning squadron from Guam, and an amphibious ship carrying a Marine Expeditionary Unit. They will soon be in position to support relief efforts to include the generation of clean water. We are leading an international coalition to help with im-

mediate humanitarian relief, rehabilitation, and long-term reconstruction efforts. India, Japan, and Australia have pledged to help us coordinate these relief efforts, and I am confident many more nations will join this core group in short order. Reports of strong charitable donations are also very encouraging and reflect the true generosity and compassion of the American people.

Initial findings of American assessment teams on the ground indicate that the need for financial and other assistance will steadily increase in the days and weeks ahead. Because of this information and based on the recommendation of Secretary Powell and Administrator Natsios, I am today committing \$350 million to fund the U.S. portion of the relief effort. Our contributions will continue to be revised as the full effects of this terrible tragedy become clearer.

Our thoughts and prayers are with all those affected by this epic disaster.

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Message on the Observance of New Year's Day, 2005 *December 31, 2004*

As we begin the New Year, our prayers go out to the people who have lost so much to the recent series of disasters in the Indian Ocean region. The past few days have brought loss and grief to the world that

is beyond our comprehension. America will continue to stand with the affected governments to bring aid to those in need. Together the world will cope with the loss and prevail over this destruction.

In the United States, we go forward in the New Year with confidence and faith in the future.

Over the past year, Americans have shown resolve and patience in the war on terror. Our military men and women have brought justice to the enemy and honor to our country. Because of their bravery, over 50 million people in Iraq and Afghanistan are now free. At home, Americans have restored the vigor of our economy and answered the call to serve neighbors in need.

In the year ahead, we will persevere in the ongoing war on terror to make our Nation safer and stronger. We will continue to confront disease, hunger, and poverty at home and abroad. We will build on our economic progress and strengthen Social Security for the next generation so that all

our citizens can realize the promise of America. And we will continue to improve our public schools and uphold our deepest values of faith, family, and service.

We are grateful to the men and women of our Armed Forces who serve and sacrifice to defend our liberty. These heroes and their families have the thanks and respect of our entire Nation. We pray for their safety and for peace and understanding throughout the world.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes for a Happy New Year. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless America.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.